



THIS WEEK IN IRAQ

The Official Newsletter of the Multi-National Force - Iraq

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Defeating Special Groups

FOB FALCON — As the security situation across Baghdad continues to show signs of significant improvement, Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment “Regulars,” 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, are reaping the benefits from more than three months of concentrated efforts to create a lasting security in the Aamel community, located in the Rashid District of southern Baghdad.

In the first three months since assuming its mission in early April, the Soldiers from the 22nd Inf. Regt. have detained 56 criminals and terrorists, to include 17 of Baghdad’s most wanted individuals, and seized approximately 26 weapons caches comprised of automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices and mortar rounds.

Since July, the company has captured neither criminal, terrorist, nor weapon, but not from lack of trying, said Capt. Drew Conover, commander, Company A, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B. He said that in his opinion

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Capt. Drew Conover, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, checks-in at an Abna al-Iraq (Sons of Iraq) checkpoint in the Aamel community of the Rashid district in southern Baghdad. Photo by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams.

This Week in News ...

New Signs of Peace Continue in Amarah

IA Confiscates Two Tons of HME



Press Conference: Northern Iraq Security Operations

Reconstruction Report: The latest from USACE

Hot Item: See Footage from MNF-I on Our YouTube Channel



Journalism Conference in al Kut

FOB DELTA — Iraqi journalists gathered at the al Kut Hotel to discuss problems, challenges and possible solutions facing their profession in southern Iraq, at a conference held from July 21- 23.

“You are all making history today by attending the first journalism conference in all of southern Iraq,” said Vanessa Beary, Wasit Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Diplomacy Officer, in opening remarks at the conference.

“Some of what will be discussed over the next couple of days will inevitably be the role of a free press in a democracy,”

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A student of the Al Abbas primary school explains locations on a map that is painted on the outside of the newly refurbished school. Photo by Staff Sgt. J.B. Jaso III.

Rebuilding Education

CAMP TAJI — The schoolhouse is run down.

Water leaks through numerous cracks in the roof and air conditioners do not operate, effectively causing temperatures inside the building to climb to unbearable lengths.

The walls covered with mold, no doors to the classrooms, broken windows, and cracks in the walls large enough to see the surrounding farmlands.

Despite all this, approximately 600 students at the Al Abbas primary school, located in northwest Baghdad's remote New Taji Nahia, continued to study and garner their education.

Capt. Shaun Wheelwright first visited the school in February and said he was saddened to see the conditions of the

school. Wheelwright, the former executive officer for Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, saw that more than half of their desks were broken, without desktops or seats, and each desk was used for six or more students.

Wheelwright said he wanted to help in any way that he could. That help began after he told his wife, about the poor conditions. He said she was also saddened to hear about the conditions and contacted a Hawaiian-based company, Oils of Aloha, for assistance.

The first donation of school supplies

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Counter-terrorism Capabilities Expanding

WASHINGTON — An Iraqi organization tasked with consolidating and coordinating that country's counter-terrorism effort is now capable of conducting unilateral missions, a U.S. military official said July 24.

"[The Iraqi National Counterterrorism Force's] primary mission is to synchronize and focus all elements of Iraqi national power to defeat terrorism here in Iraq," U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Simeon Trombitas, director of the Iraqi National Counterterrorism Force Transition Team, told online journalist and bloggers.

The Iraqi unit was formed in 2003 and has since been trained by U.S. Special Forces soldiers, Trombitas said.

While U.S. forces still train with the specialized Iraqi force and conduct missions with the Iraqis, they're now capable of running their own missions with limited U.S. help, he said.

"They're comfortable, at this point in time, doing unilateral operations, even without some of our enablers," Trombitas explained. "I think that they're well on the road to conducting the majority of their operations."

Trombitas attributed the Iraqis' capa-

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Timeline for Drawdown Would Be Dangerous, Mullen Says

WASHINGTON — Setting a timeline for U.S. troop withdrawals from Iraq would be "dangerous," and troop reductions there should continue to be made based on security conditions on the ground, the nation's top military officer said July 20.

President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki this week agreed to set a general "time horizon" for bringing more U.S. troops home from the war, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen said in an interview on "Fox News Sunday," but he added that to his knowledge, the agreement does not

include specific dates. "I think the consequences could be very dangerous in that regard," he said.

The admiral stressed his view that troop-strength decisions must be conditions-based, but said he wants to see more U.S. forces come home. "I think the strategic goals of having timed horizons are ones that we all seek," he said, "because eventually we would like to see U.S. forces draw down and eventually all come home," he said.

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Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visits with a neighborhood leader in Rashid, Iraq. DOD photo.